

PRIMARY CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF CAVALRY IN THE NEXT EUROPEAN WAR.

*Lecture given before the Berlin Military Society by Lieut.-General
von PELET-NARBONNE.*

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IF we would solve the question of the primary conditions necessary to ensure success for cavalry in a future European war, it is first of all imperative to find out what are the defects of this arm upon which are based the causes of the unsatisfactory results obtained in the different campaigns since the year 1813; what, on the other hand, are the improvements that have been made in organisation and training; and what methods of employment have led to success—in order then to form an estimate—aided by the extraordinary progress of the present day—how this arm may be made to achieve the best possible results? I would here remark that I shall at present avoid touching upon the subject of individual training, which has had so extraordinary an influence upon the success of cavalry, and I shall entirely confine myself to a consideration of organisation and tactics.

When the Napoleonic wars were over, Field-Marshal Blücher, in July, 1816, asked the following questions of a number of his most valued cavalry generals:—"Why has the Prussian cavalry not performed what was expected of it during the late campaigns against Napoleon, and how are the evident defects to be remedied?"

The Field-Marshal here states, as an incontrovertible opinion, that the results achieved by the cavalry had not been satisfactory, and this, too, in spite of the successes at Haynau, Luckau, at the Katzbach, at Roth-Nauslitz, Liebertwolkwitz, at Wachau in 1813, and at La Chaussée and Laon in 1814. The cavalry had certainly not done what was expected of it at Gross-Görschen, Wittstock, Dresden, nor to any extent at Dennewitz, during the pursuit after Leipzig, nor, above all, at Ligny. The incidents of this battle—where the Marshal in the thick of the fight was, as is well known, unhorsed—and in regard to which Blücher and other generals blame the cavalry—seem to have contributed in a great degree to the unfavourable judgment passed on this arm.

The officers questioned by Blücher, although considering the question from quite different points of view, came to the unanimous conclusion "that the reason why the Prussian cavalry had so signally failed to do what was justly expected of it was because the requisite numbers, both in the cavalry as a whole and even in the staff of squadrons and regiments were wanting; that they had never had any instruction, training, or practice in working in masses; and that further the cavalry of the Landwehr, brought together at a moment's notice, were of no use to give the weak Line cavalry the necessary accession of strength, while their—from every point of view—in-different performance made them a drag upon the Line cavalry."

It may here be mentioned that during the campaigns some of the Landwehr cavalry regiments melted away to a strength of only 100 horses—a fact which furnishes a general standard of the value of raw horses only brought into the ranks at the moment of mobilisation—and that the Landwehr cavalry thus became such a drag upon the Line regiments that the two were in some cases amalgamated, even involving the actual breaking up of some regiments.¹ It seems curious that one finds no hint in the opinions of the generals of any need for increased attention being devoted to training in reconnaissance, although already even on home service,² where the conditions were particularly favourable, the performances of the cavalry in this branch of their duty had been very unsatisfactory, and later on they had not even attained to the low standard which was then required in this particular. One misses, too, in the opinions expressed, any hint of a matter which is for cavalry of the first importance—the selection of leaders. And yet, the closer one studies those wars, the more does the importance of this question push itself to the front.

In the Napoleonic wars it is always the same regiments which we see adding to their reputations, while others are seldom, if ever, mentioned. The reason for this did not lie either with the troops or with the material, for if we examine into the root of the matter it will be seen again and again that the cause is to be sought in the personality of the leader. Yes, we cannot but admit that at times the inferior Landwehr cavalry did wonders under really good commanders. Thus Colonel Count Henckel at La Chaussée, with five weak squadrons, overthrew one of the celebrated regiments of Polish Lancers; Major von Falkenhausen—who had already, in 1813, distinguished himself as a partisan leader, when sent to the front at La Belle Alliance with a hundred troopers of a Silesian Landwehr cavalry regiment, defeated a hostile force four times his strength, broke through to the right and in the rear of the French, and returned with important information; Major von Blankenburg, surprised partly by his own neglect in 1815, in the town of Senlis, when only a portion of his Landwehr troopers had time to mount, still managed to drive back the superior numbers of the enemy, and pursued them through the town.³ From this time, and from the teachings of later wars, it follows, as we shall see, that for cavalry more than for the other arms of the Service, the personality of the leader must turn the scale; all those who made the campaign of 1870-71 with the cavalry, will agree with me that a Seydlitz at the head of medium Landwehr cavalry, consisting of good men, would be able to make its superiority felt.

I rate the importance of personal influence for this arm so highly that I consider all else should give way to it, and that all that can be said or done to increase the importance of the mounted branch in future wars will be of no avail, if this essential requirement is neglected. It is the case that often with many men their powers develop in the face of the enemy, which, up to that time, have been afforded no scope or opportunity for display, while often, too, reputations are lost. It is quite certain that in the cavalry, level-headedness and the ability

¹The idea underlying this most futile measure was that the insufficiently trained Landwehr should learn their work from the men of the Line.

²See Frhr. v. Freytag, "*Aufklärung und Armeeführung dargestellt an den Ereignissen der Schlesischen Armee, 1813.*"

³"*Napoleon's Untergang.*" By v. Lettow. Berlin, 1904.

to rapidly form bold resolutions, are far more required than in the other arms. The arc for a leader of cavalry seems to be that, when the full strength of manhood is unimpaired, when the will to *dare* is not yet over-influenced by the wish to *weigh*; and the leader of horse should be sought among men who still find pleasure in galloping across country. Tactical and strategical knowledge, with assurance, born of experience, in the leadership of the men placed under him, are further indispensable qualities, since youth and hard-riding of themselves are not enough. For this reason the idea, which now and again is brought forward, that, on mobilisation, vigorous young officers should, without regard to seniority, be put at the head of cavalry divisions—can hardly be carried out; the art of handling masses of cavalry can only be acquired by practice and experience, and when these are wanting—except in the case of a genius like Seydlitz—most of the chosen will be found deficient in self-confidence, and thus unfit for their position. The stir which Blücher made about the reports above-mentioned did not fall on fruitful ground: partly by reason of the poverty of the State, in part, because the men at the head of the Army were wearied out with the long wars, things remained much as they had always been. Two great cavalry manœuvres and the issue of regulations on the subject of leading, and on the proper use of cavalry masses had no abiding influence, and we shall see later on that even the campaign of 1870-71 found the Prussian cavalry in many respects not thoroughly trained for the work it had to do.

The European wars which followed offer nothing of particular interest for our consideration—chiefly by reason of the local conditions, etc. The American Civil War of 1862-65, however, is of special importance, offering, as it does, peculiar opportunities for a critical examination of the question with which we are concerned; the only difficulty lies in gauging how far that war justifies one in drawing conclusions, so different would be the conditions under which war would be waged in Europe. If from one point of view the lessons of the war are of great value as resulting from a wholly unfettered judgment—since with neither antagonist had tradition or ordinary routine—which are often opposed to real progress and actual requirements—anything to say in the organisation and handling of the mounted forces; on the other hand, the surroundings were so different to those on a European theatre of war, and the Armies so dissimilar to those we can call out, that it is hardly possible to draw any safe conclusions from the experiences gained during it. Although there was a wide dissimilarity between the Federals and the Confederates, the material on either side, both in men and horses, was quite different to ours. While the South possessed in its sport and *shikar*-loving population, and in its well-bred horses a material which is of greater value than that at our command, the North had neither suitable men nor horses, and only in the closing years of the war were they able by dint of practice and by enlistments in the Western States to form some kind of a useful cavalry. Under such conditions as obtained in the Southern States—as will nowhere be found in Europe—it was there possible to improvise an excellent mounted force, deficient, however, in the attributes which would have made it fit to take its place in line of battle; for this, both the troops and the leaders were wanting in practice and experience. In the North, where the raising of cavalry at first led only to disastrous

results, far more was accomplished in the way of improvisation of artillery (as by the French Republic in 1871), and this arm soon showed a great superiority over that possessed by the South.

How little one can measure such unique brilliant performances—as some of those of the Southern cavalry—by the European standard, we understand from the raid made by Stuart in October, 1862, into Pennsylvania, with 1,800 horse and 2 guns to rear of the whole hostile force, during which, owing to the wealth of horses possessed by the country, he was able to remount the greater number of his men, who then marched on riding a new horse, and leading the old one. The Northern cavalry also followed suit, when, at the end of April, 1863, they burst into Virginia, under Stoneman, and took 800 horses from the Virginian farmers.

The fact that these raids were successful invites discussion as to the possibility of this sort of warfare in a European campaign. I cannot altogether agree with Lieut.-Colonel Frhr. von Freytag in his "*Studien über Kriegführung auf Grundlage des Amerikanischen Sezessionskriegs*," when he states that "to-day no Army has such a preponderance of cavalry that it would occur to any leader to use it, as here, in partisan warfare, and thus expose it to losses which would render it unfit for use in more important operations." It is clear that in a hostile country the question would always arise in regard to such operations, as to how many of his mounted men the general in command could count upon seeing again, and whether the venture seems to promise adequate results. It is very plain that in 1870-71 our cavalry, as also that of the French, was—owing to faulty armament and training—quite unfitted for such operations, and on a European theatre of war, raids as carried out by Stuart could hardly be decided on if cavalry divisions, organised as such, are to be ready for use as they now are expected to be. But were it possible, as a condition of success, to arrive at greater independence in the cavalry divisions as self-contained fighting units, it is difficult to see why these should not find opportunities for operating against the enemy's flanks and communications (which, in these days of gigantic Armies, have increased in importance and vulnerability), as well as for work of other kinds. If this is not admitted, then we renounce getting the full value of the element of speed, whereby cavalry can appear quickly and again disappear from view, while the provision of more self-contained fighting units will naturally reduce the risk of increased losses. I consider some of these raids to be perfectly feasible in European warfare under similar circumstances—such a one as that, for instance, which the northern general, Stoneman, carried out with 3,500 horse, between the Rapahannock and James River in April, 1863, and which occasioned immense loss to his opponent. The question of the utility of such a raid as an isolated case must be decided on its merits; I am now merely discussing its practicability. For, on the other hand, it is undeniable that such raids had, not infrequently, disastrous results, as when, for instance, in Wheeler's march with the Southern cavalry at the end of August, 1864, to destroy the railway at Chattanooga, the achievement bore no proportion to the sacrifices it entailed, while—worse still—it robbed General Hood of the bulk of his cavalry, with the result that his information was faulty, and, being threatened in rear, he was compelled to fall back. Naturally, the carrying out of such operations in one's own or in a friendly country is considerably easier than in a hostile one,

and it appears to me unquestionable, that had the French cavalry been better organised and trained in the second part of the war, it would have been able to operate with considerable success against the inferior *etappen* troops holding our lines of communication.¹ One can imagine what an influence the French cavalry would have exercised upon the German operations had it succeeded in cutting the railway between France and Germany for any length of time.

A characteristic of the cavalry actions of the war of Secession was the constant employment of dismounted fire. The reason lay in the fact that the Southern horsemen from their open-air life were mounted sharpshooters, excellently trained in the use of the rifle, but wholly unpractised in the close order movements of the attack *as cavalry*; the thickly wooded country, however, in which great battles were fought out, necessitated the mounted riflemen form of action if the cavalry were to be anything but mere lookers-on. No doubt, also for the same reasons it happened that fire-action was frequently employed when the occasion was unsuited for it, as when Stuart, dismounting his men to attack Bulford's brigade in the Brandy Station battle, was placed in grave straits by the sudden appearance in his rear of a mounted brigade of the enemy. Against any other foe he would have paid dearly for his faulty tactics. In spite of the frequent employment of dismounted action, these horsemen had about them nothing of the character of mounted infantry—they looked upon themselves as cavalry, and proved that they were such by the excellent use they made of their sabres in various attacks carried out by individual squadrons and regiments.

On the 8th June, 1863, Stuart did employ his men in mass under General Lee, in an important operation entirely as a mounted force. At the same time the men were so accustomed to fight on foot that for them it was an every-day affair, and their operations—such as that where Stuart carried out a night attack dismounted at Catlett's Station on 22nd August, 1862—may be taken as models for that form of action. Over and over again the cavalry entrenched themselves to hold certain points, as did Sheridan, the best of the Northern Generals, in order to secure his communications at Old Coldharbour on 31st May, 1864.² If, then, the use of cavalry in this civil war cannot, in many respects, be looked upon as a model for us, we still learn from it what can be done by a cavalry to whom fighting on foot comes natural, and which has equipped itself in every way for the particular exigencies of that theatre of war. In any case, one must remember that *from the days of Napoleon until the present time in no single campaign has cavalry exercised so vast an influence over the operations as they did in this war*, wherein of a truth the personality of the leaders has been very striking—such men as, in the South, the God-inspired Stuart, and later, the redoubtable Fitzhugh Lee; and on the Northern side, Sheridan and Pleasanton. Stuart, the personification of heroism, became also the Pioneer.

(To be continued.)

¹See Cardinal v. Widdern's "*Der Krieg auf den rückwärtigen Verbindungen des deutschen Heeres, 1871.*"

²We see everywhere in this campaign that the constant employment of dismounted action in no way destroyed the dash of the mounted man. When considering the Russian cavalry in the last Turkish war, we shall find the exact opposite to be the case.

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Continued from January JOURNAL, p. 102.

IN order to assist at arriving at a correct judgment of the efficiency of the Prussian cavalry in the war of 1866, a quotation is here made from the words of General von Moltke in a report to King William I. on the 25th July, 1868.¹

The General says: "Where, in the war of 1866, the Prussian cavalry were successful in action, it always charged down upon the enemy. Some individual squadrons and regiments again and again showed themselves superior to the enemy, and some splendid march operations have been performed. Still, the value of this arm remained comparatively speaking, small, while a large number of units never came in contact with the enemy at all." In another place, he says, "Practically the cavalry *never* supported the infantry." The General quotes only ten instances "where regiments, as regiments, and one where a brigade have attacked. On the other hand, the cavalry was often not at hand when required, and had to be sent for. At Königgrätz, where the cavalry of the 1st Army was opportunely in the right place at the right time, but was prevented from moving forward until the infantry had crossed the Sadowa, it neglected to prepare and arrange crossing places. Only two fords were practicable, and the leading detachments came into action before those in rear were across. When the general pursuit should have begun, the action of the cavalry ceased altogether. Some brigades remained quite inactive. The reserve cavalry division of the 2nd Army was kept so far in rear that it only came up at the end of the battle. The cause of the indifferent performance of the cavalry lies not in the material, but in the leading, the formation, and the distribution. The cavalry also often shirked coming under shell fire." I shall come back later to this point.

Moltke then remarks: "Our cavalry failed, perhaps, not so much in actual capacity as in self-confidence. But all its initiative had been destroyed at manœuvres, *where criticism and blame had become almost synonymous*, and it therefore shirked independent bold action, and as much as possible kept out of sight far in the rear." Further on, Moltke complains "that the reserve cavalry of the 1st and 2nd Armies, which, in spite of the supply difficulties, was

¹ Moltke's "Taktisch-strategische Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1857-1871." Berlin, 1900.

carefully kept in hand until the battle of 3rd July, was then never thrown in front of the advancing columns just when it might have performed important reconnaissance duties." He concludes with the words: "The reserve cavalry of the 1st and 2nd Armies has been employed very little,¹ or not at all, in the duty of guiding the Army. For long distance scouting this cavalry has never been used at all."

If one compares the efficiency as sketched by Moltke—of the Prussian cavalry of 1866—(that of the enemy in self-sacrifice, as shown on the 3rd July, was on much the same plane), with the performances of the arm in the American Civil War above-mentioned (see JOURNAL for January last, pages 100-102), one *must impartially admit, after consideration of the different conditions, that there was the real article*. How helpless and inept were these European horsemen compared with those led by Stuart.

Most extraordinary of all, to our modern ideas of the employment of cavalry, seems the meagre use made of the mounted men for reconnaissance. As though Murat's cavalry divisions of the French Army had never been sent far to the front, with us the cavalry force—known by the ill-omened name of "Reserve cavalry"—was kept in rear, while the divisional cavalry, composed of advanced guard, main body, and reserve, reconnoitred anything but far afield. Thus approved methods were altogether forgotten, a heavy indictment against the manner in which military history has been studied during the years which have elapsed since the Napoleonic wars.²

We shall see that the defects recognised by Moltke in 1866 were remedied in 1870-71, so far as concerns the work of reconnaissance, and so far also as reform was possible in so short a time. Other shortcomings, which had not revealed themselves in the brief campaign and which were unnoticed by Moltke—such as the unsatisfactory fire-arm, and the want of practice in its use—were not remedied. A further evil, which may not have come before the General, was the poor condition of the numerous registered horses in the squadrons—this was, however, noticed, and the cavalry reorganisation, which had already been put in hand, was continued after the war. In regiments where it had not already existed, a fifth squadron was raised, and this was not mobilised as in 1864 and 1866, but was organised as a *dépôt* or reserve squadron, whereby the intrinsic value of the cavalry was appreciably increased.

In connection with this reorganisation, I would emphasise the immense importance for our cavalry of this particular work, and that *any tampering with the principle of having as few registered horses as possible in the field squadrons, must seriously lower the efficiency of the arm*. May the cavalry be spared so mischievous and retrograde a step! The experiences of the War of Liberation have already shown us what we may expect from the admission of raw young horses in the ranks, for not only do these soon succumb under hard work, but when drafted into the field service squadrons in large numbers they lower the whole level, since any demands made on the troops must be carried out according to the powers of the horses with least endurance. I may here, perhaps, recall a personal experience. In the ranks of

¹ After the battle on 3rd July.

² "Geschichte des Krieges von 1866 in Deutschland," von Lettow-Vorbeck. 1 Bd. Gastein-Langensalze. Berlin, 1896.

the squadron which I commanded in 1870, there were twelve remounts—a fair enough number since one can always employ some of these as batmen's horses to accompany the wagons. Of those in the ranks four succumbed to the hard work of a reconnaissance, carried out by the squadron from Weissenburg, across the Sauer at Gunstett,¹ and only two of them ever again saw their garrison at all.

I now come back to Moltke's remark that the cavalry shirked exposure to shell fire. As an example, in the report of the battle of Königgrätz, reference is made to a cavalry brigade of the Elbe Army, which did nothing, but which, according to its own account, was subjected to a heavy artillery fire in which "the shells were bursting close in front of the brigade"—result, one wounded hussar! Whence this avoidance of casualties so often noticed with the cavalry? The men on horses are the same brave fellows as their comrades on foot, and when on patrol, they showed themselves cool and daring even to foolhardiness. The cause must be sought in the training under which the leaders were formed. One heard everlastingly repeated the axiom that cavalry must not run the risk of incurring casualties from fire prior to the charge, it must, therefore, be kept in the rear; this great respect for infantry fire, which, in itself, was quite justifiable, had developed a timidity for coming to grips at all—we shall find the same when we come to consider the Russo-Turkish War—and all the talk about "the costly arm—more difficult to replace than the others"—may also have contributed to this ultra-caution. We should remember the construction which General Carl v. Schmidt gave to this dogma, and which he thus expressed: "This arm is far too costly to have any check placed on its employment." Principles, correct in themselves, have also done harm through an exaggerated stress being placed on them, particularly at manœuvres—see Moltke's Report—and one should be thankful that our cavalry is now taught to attack and come to close quarters with the other arms. Another, and perhaps the strongest, reason of all, for the poor results obtained by the cavalry on the battlefield, lies in the characteristics of many leaders. An attacking cavalry is like a shot which has been fired, the effect of which cannot be foreseen, and which, under certain circumstances, might recoil on the firers. Many a cavalry officer, personally brave enough, has shrunk from making up his mind to a course of action, the result of which cannot be determined in advance, and which may demand great, and perhaps fruitless, sacrifices from his men. With the other arms it is possible to break off an action—not so with the cavalry charge, fate must run its course. *"With cavalry, everything depends exclusively upon the initiative of the commander, hence the immense importance of the personal element. Without his direct personal influence, nothing can be done."* On the other hand, it may, for instance, be quite conceivable that a division of infantry in a chance encounter wins the day entirely through the natural course of events, and the energetic action of the subordinate leaders, without the divisional general having had anything whatever to do with obtaining this result. The leaders of bodies of cavalry attached to other arms, whose commander is slow to make up his mind, might, in such a case, be less inclined than usual to order an attack to be carried out, which they know to be necessary. The

¹ General Staff History, p. 201.

cavalry commander, free from all responsibility, would, no doubt, accept such an order gladly and carry it out with skill and energy. The celebrated charge by Bredow at Vionville would probably have never been made had a direct order not been received. Sometimes theory and sometimes practice is the chief factor in achieving great results.

Cavalry must be educated up to a readiness to act, absolutely regardless of consequences, and to a determination to conquer. We must recognise that there is nothing out of the common in the blood of a mounted man; this arm must risk casualties, as the infantry has often done before, without losing its battle value; while exaggerated ideas must be avoided, as, for instance, where the charge just mentioned has been dubbed "the death ride," as though such an action had never previously been heard of. Such an attack has been made before with the same bravery and equal losses, as also have many deeds of the other arms, without much fuss having been made about them.¹ The faults, from which the German cavalry suffered during the war of 1870-71, were due—in so far as they have not already been dealt with—to the *Personality* of the superior commanders—a question, the importance of which had been frequently emphasised, but not altogether happily solved—more especially in the fact that they avoided every opportunity of manœuvring the division entrusted to them, so that in consequence of this fault, many of them would certainly and naturally have been found deficient in self-confidence if they had been suddenly called upon to command 24 squadrons combined. This want of confidence, felt and apparent, to perform the duty laid upon them, could be seen from the fact that the divisions were hardly ever manœuvred as a whole; they worked with three separate brigades, each of which had its own orders, and not infrequently the divisional general rode apart with his staff, taking no part in what was going on. So, for instance, the 5th Cavalry Division, in its operations the day after Metz, and the 4th in the advance from Chartres to Coulmiers on the 9th November, the latter in the former battle.² Since one cannot imagine that the senior officers at the head of these divisions did not know the value of concerted action, the explanation of this phenomenon may be found above, while also the reluctance to launch the whole division to the attack may have had something to say to it.

Another fault was, further, that when the war broke out, not only were the divisions improvised, but, to some extent, also the brigades. Commanders did not know their staffs, and had no knowledge of the capabilities of the subordinate leaders; this had the worst possible results, for, in the case of most important duties, those detailed for them, according to seniority, were often the least capable of carrying them out. That the unavoidable friction caused by such improvisations has far worse consequences for cavalry than for the

¹ "Das Leben des Soldaten im Gefecht, wo es sein muss, ohne Bedenken zu opfern, dies ist das grosse Kriegsgesetz, dem sich der Soldat wie der Anführer mit gleicher Bereitwilligkeit unterwerfen muss." Boyen, Denkwürdigkeiten II.

² On this occasion the divisional commander was present with one brigade.

other arms, and that misunderstandings arise which are difficult to smooth, will be apparent to all; clear, full tone can only be got from a well-trained orchestra.

Another bad thing was the inadequate armament. Whole divisions did not possess a single regiment armed with carbines, while the weapon itself was of but small value, and the troops had not been properly trained to its use. The training with the *arme blanche* was good enough, but still many faults in equipment passed at that time unnoticed. Training in reconnaissance was then not nearly so thorough as it is now, although good enough compared with the utter inefficiency of the enemy's cavalry in the first part of the war, but we often failed from unsatisfactory armament under the conditions which arose later in the "People's War."

In spite of all faults, many smart performances by the cavalry in this war show us that a good beginning had been made with these regiments, where they were well handled, and *Vionville will always remain as a proud page of glory in the history of the Prussian cavalry*. But how often again has this same cavalry sat still and watched the struggles of the sister-arms, although they may have longed to take part, and the laurels, so to speak, lay on the road in front of them? Beaune la Rolande is a case in point; while Artenay and Coulmiers might each have been another Rosbach for the German cavalry. The importance of the personal element is ever apparent. How differently would things have turned out had a General Carl von Schmidt or a Colonel von Alvensleben been in command. Is it mere chance that the regiments trained and led by these men fought with such special distinction; that the 16th Hussars were engaged, mounted and on foot, more frequently than any other cavalry regiment of the whole Army; and that in the 15th Uhlans all the four squadron commanders found occasions to win for themselves the Iron Cross of the 1st Class? Many regiments had the same opportunities to come to the front, but they did not take advantage of them; the cause of this has been discussed.

As before, after the Napoleonic wars, so now no doubt was felt that the achievements of the cavalry were not up to what had been anticipated, and a cavalry committee, which was formed on the 13th March, 1872, in Berlin, was ordered to deliberate on "the changes and modifications necessitated in the drill books of 1855 by the latest experiences, and on the orders for the instruction of the troops in field duties," further, "what changes were required in armament, clothing, and equipment."

The proceedings of this committee did not remain buried in their reports, as was the case with the proposals of Blücher and his generals, but they have formed the basis of a reorganisation of the German cavalry, which has placed this arm in a position to await the future on the field of honour with joy and confidence.

The remodelling and improvement of the cavalry has not, however, come to an end with the progress already made; circumstances demand further improvement in every direction—to stand fast, content with what has been done where there can be no finality, would be to go back.

(To be continued.)

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Continued from February JOURNAL, p. 224, and concluded.

THE Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 affords food for some reflections of special interest. It was possible to feel quite an excitement at the prospective performances of the Russian cavalry in this campaign, since only a short time before—in September, 1876—great strategical cavalry manœuvres had taken place in Poland; these had been initiated before any other Army had attempted them, and operations on such a scale had never been carried out before or since repeated. They had aroused universal attention, and (according to Russian sources) had been a brilliant success.

By the Imperial orders, the cavalry was given the following problems to solve: "To interrupt the mobilisation of isolated portions of a hostile army; to effect the seizure of lines of railway and points of importance in order either to destroy them or to secure their possession; to cover the mobilisation and railway centres against operations by hostile cavalry; to reconnoitre wide stretches of country as well as special localities and hostile forces; and above all to practise the duties of covering the army and obtaining information."

It was thought that the Russian cavalry would have extracted special value from these manœuvres, and would have made the results of their experience apparent in the next campaign; however, it did not fulfil the expectations which had been formed of it.

Russian writers are their own keenest critics. General Kuropatkin, who was then Chief of the Staff to General Skobelev, gave the following opinion on the performances of the Russian cavalry in September, 1877, when it should have covered the investment of Plevna, and when energetic action was specially desirable¹:—"In

¹ Kritische Rückblicke auf den Russisch-türkischen Krieg von 1877-78, nach aufsätsen von Kuropatkin, bearbeitet von Oberst Krahmer. Berlin, 1889.

conclusion," he writes, "there is only this to be said: that 90 Russian and Roumanian squadrons and sotnias ought to have been masters of the whole of the country round Plevna, with good leadership on one side and on the other the comparatively defective composition of the Turkish cavalry. Our horsemen should, by constant readiness for hand-to-hand fighting, have forced the enemy's Regular cavalry and Circassians to flee whenever they appeared, and should have been invulnerable to the Turkish infantry, had they only avoided becoming involved in a fire action. Had they been quite confident that, in these days as had almost invariably been the case in the past, a bold and resolute attack under favourable conditions upon an infantry detachment on the march, on an escort to a convoy, or by an attack upon the flank or rear, or a surprise attack on an infantry bivouac, would have achieved certain success at a small loss, our cavalry would have developed a great power and have become a valuable source of assistance to the other arms. The least movement of the enemy in the theatre of war would have quickly become known, and the arrival of supplies or reinforcements of any kind have been entirely prevented or seriously hindered. As a matter of fact, our cavalry was not employed to advantage. The duties of reconnaissance were either inefficiently performed or not carried out at all."

In proof of this last statement, Kuropatkin relates several extraordinary instances, and amongst others gives the following:—"After the cavalry of General Loschkaref had reached the Sofia road on September 8th, communication was not established with the cavalry of the left wing either on the 8th, 9th, or 10th, although only a few kilometres separated one force of 34 squadrons from another of 18 sotnias."

As a reason for the small value of the cavalry operations in the days preceding the assault on Plevna, Kuropatkin gives:—"Disinclination of commanders to undertake operations which were well within their powers, but which might bring them in contact with the Turkish infantry, and so run the risk of suffering loss." Later on Kuropatkin speaks of the fundamental mistake which the Russians made in regard to the employment of cavalry. "Many commanders," he says, "believed that with the improvement in fire-arms the rôle of cavalry on the battle-field was played out, so long as victory or defeat yet hung in the balance. They were persuaded that cavalry attacks during an action would be of no value, as they offered no chances of success." Kuropatkin then further adds: "As of old, so even in these days, a comparatively unimportant though fresh effort, either from our side or that of the enemy, which brings a reserve of cavalry, artillery, or infantry into action, can yet decide the issue. At this decisive moment to hold back the cavalry is absurd, no matter what losses they may suffer. Were even a whole division of cavalry to be sacrificed, this must be endured if, by their annihilation, victory is snatched from the hands of the enemy, or our army is saved from defeat. *'In peace time, cavalry must be educated to live for that sublime moment when such a sacrifice is demanded.'* (We must remember that in war the gaining of time often inclines victory to one side, and that in a successful attack cavalry losses are generally insignificant.)"

Kuropatkin demands, therefore, "during peace a training in self-sacrifice." This can only be done by means of manœuvres, and

here, so far as circumstances allow, must we teach cavalry to charge home. I have nothing to add to Kuropatkin's words; I have already myself said something of the same kind,¹ and would refer to what has been already mentioned in regard to our own experiences in the last war.

In spite of the poor performances and consequent small losses of the cavalry from the enemy's fire, the strength of the 14 cavalry regiments concentrated before Plevna had been reduced by 5,000 horses through the increased strain thrown on outpost duty by the exaggerated precautions against surprise. The troops numbered only 7 and 8 files. In this manner "the costly arm" shrank away without having been of any real use. A weak cavalry force would have completely disappeared from mere attrition, and cavalry should therefore be kept up to a certain strength, so that it may be able on occasion to endure loss.

Only one Russian unit—the Brigade of Cossacks of the Caucasus—distinguished itself in the Balkan campaign, and, as cavalry, engaged the Turkish infantry with success. At Loftcha on September 3rd, 1877, two complete Turkish battalions were entirely dispersed by this brigade, and the enemy were pursued until nightfall. It was here demonstrated what even Cossacks, who are not trained to the charge, can do when attacking infantry.² The brigade commander, Colonel Tutolmin, was, however, a distinguished cavalry officer, while the superior commanders, Generals Kryloff and Loschkaref, were, on the other hand, not up to their work. The last-named officer is mentioned by Kuropatkin as having, when ordered on September 21st, to move rapidly to the assistance of Kryloff's corps, only started on the following day, and taken an hour to cover two kilometres, so that when at last he came upon the corps he found it already retiring.

Colonel Baykoff³ passes the same judgment as Kuropatkin upon the work of the cavalry in this campaign. He says that the idea of cavalry officers, young and old, was:—"What can cavalry do against infantry with the modern rifle? If the cavalry were given a rifle and bayonet, it would be a different matter; but without these, cavalry cannot engage infantry"—and the cavalry acted accordingly. If cavalry met with infantry, it either retired altogether or dismounted to fight on foot. To what an extent this was the case, the expenditure by the cavalry of one and a quarter million rounds of ammunition is the best proof. Things indeed went so far that patrols left their horses behind and marched several versts on foot (in one case it was five). Again, at Tirnova, Russian cavalry of the advance guard were seen

¹ Die Aussichten der Kavallerie im Kampf gegen die Infanterie und die Artillerie. Vortrag, gehalten in der Militärische Gesellschaft zu Berlin am 3 November 1897, von Graf v. Pelet-Narbonne, General Lieutenant z. D. Beiheft zum Militär-Wochenblatt, 1898, 3. Heft.

² Die Kaukasische Kasakenbrigade in Balkanfeldzug, 1877-78. Kriegsgeschichtliche Studie von Thilo von Trotha, Berlin, 1894.

³ Anwendung und Ausführung des Fuss-gefechts der russischen Kavallerie. Auf Grund des Reglements für die Abgesessenen Teile der Kavallerie und der Kasaken vom Jahre, 1884, kritisierend bearbeitet von Baykoff, K. R. Oberst im Generalstabe. Uebersetzt von Trost, Oberlt., Berlin, 1885.

to dismount and form square in order to protect themselves against attack by 300 Turkish horsemen, after which the cavalry fought as infantry. These men had lost all the cavalry spirit, and had developed into inferior mounted infantry—and why? They had been taught everything possible except to charge home! Colonel Baykoff, however, does not fail to appreciate the necessity for arming the cavalry with a good firearm, for he says:—"The cavalry fire-arm should be in no way inferior to that of the infantry, and all future technical improvements in regard to the rifle should be employed by the cavalry." And in another place he remarks:—"It is unquestionably important that the whole of the cavalry has been trained to fight on foot, and armed with a long-range, accurate rifle with bayonet. It may be said that this has untied its hands and increased its independence and freedom"; further, "The long range magazine rifle gives the initiative much greater value and sets the cavalry free, according to circumstances, either to attack mounted or to receive the enemy with fire from behind cover."

But—and this is Baykoff's proviso—if the dash of the cavalryman is to be maintained, he must not allow himself to get into the way of a faulty and too frequent use of dismounted action. Baykoff, who had many incidents of 1877-78 in his mind, holds that dismounting easily degenerates into an impulse of self-preservation, and for this reason some men take to it more kindly than to a cool daring on horseback—men who wear the cavalry uniform but who do not possess the dashing cavalry spirit.

I agree altogether with the utterances of this Russian writer. We may draw from them the lesson that in arming cavalry with a good fire-arm, care must be taken that the cavalry spirit does not evaporate, and we should therefore stick to the hard and fast rule that cavalry may only dismount when the *terrain* does not admit of their attaining their object mounted, and when their own infantry is not at hand.

The campaign of 1897 between Turkey and Greece offers no occasion for remark, and I turn to the South African War of 1899-1902.

The importance of this war, in relation to the development of tactics, was at first greatly over-rated, and only lately has this been recognised. Especially in regard to cavalry has this turned out to be the case. At first too little account was taken of conditions totally opposed to those found in Europe. The fighting took place on a theatre of war and, so far as the English were concerned, against an enemy, both differing completely from what would be met with in Europe. The experiences gained can therefore only be useful for Colonial wars, and especially for such a one as ours now going on in South-West Africa; but they offer no real reason for making any alteration in European tactics. But still, there are interesting conclusions to be drawn from the course of the campaign, and we find in them confirmation of what we have always held to be correct.

So far as the English cavalry is concerned, it should be borne in mind, in order properly to understand their poor performances in the early part of the war—up to Lord Roberts taking over command — that they had been till then cruelly split up, and were

never commanded or constituted as a body. When, later on, this was changed, and a cavalry division was organised and placed under command of the enterprising General French, the cavalry contributed considerably to the success of the operations—in spite, too, of the grave defects which still clung to them. Whatever was achieved, however, was, in the main, due to the personality of the leader, who must get the credit for it.

The English cavalry had been solely trained to shock action. They performed practically none of the duties of reconnaissance or covering the army; even among the officers an absolute disinclination for this work was apparent. The discipline, too, and interior economy left much to be desired. This was evident from the fact that owing to the careless seat of the men, which was not looked after by their officers, a very large number of horses were galled and rendered unworkable, and horsemastership, which did not appear to be understood, was wholly neglected.

In several cases, where the cavalry might have obtained a brilliant success, they were hindered by the complete exhaustion of the horses, due either to want of forage or to opportunities for watering being either not made use of or not being forthcoming. This latter misfortune—a peculiarity of the theatre of war—will never make itself apparent to the same extent in Europe, and an unfailing water supply is even more important than the issue of sufficient forage. In dismounted fighting the cavalry did little. On February 16th, in the action at Drieput, the dismounted men of two brigades, assisted by mounted infantry and four guns, failed to turn a Boer rear guard of some 100 men out of a good position.

The great defects of this cavalry (which appeared at that time to be the least valuable, as regards training, of the cavalries of the great Powers) could not be remedied even by a man of the energy and enterprise of French; but the campaign again teaches us that cavalry can still play an important part on active service, even when opposed to a redoubtable foe.

In regard to the so-called attack of the cavalry division at Modder River on February 15th, 1900, I cannot attach the same importance to it as is given in Vol. III. of the *Kriegsgeschichtlichen Einzelschriften*,¹ for the superiority of the cavalry was out of all proportion, since the attack was made against some 900 Boers only, who, with 3 guns, were distributed over a position four kilometres in length, while the attack was prepared for the British by 9 batteries and 2 heavy guns. The casualties—19 killed and wounded, besides 32 horses—were, moreover, particularly small. If, then, to an English officer who rode in the charge, "our chances at first seemed quite hopeless," and who, expressing the general opinion of the other officers, says: "Few of us can come out of it alive," this, to me, is merely a proof of "*to what perverted and harmful ideas the false teaching of troops may lead.*" It is, however, interesting to record that the moral

¹ *Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften* heraus gegeben vom grossen Generalstabe, Kriegsgeschichtliche Abtheilung, I, Heft III. *Erfahrungen aussereuropäischer Kriege neuester Zeit.* 1. Aus dem sudafrikanischen Kriege, 1899-1902. 2. Operationen unter Lord Roberts bis zur Einnahme von Bloemfontein, Berlin, 1904.

effect of the charging masses of horsemen was a tremendous one upon the hitherto phlegmatic Boers, who had, however, already endured a heavy artillery fire, and that it exercised a depressing influence upon the Boers who were with the laager in rear.

Nevertheless, the resulting relief of Kimberley is a great feather in the cap for the cavalry division, which should then have been in a position to end the campaign had not French, in following a side issue by pursuing the retreating besiegers of Kimberley, broken the cavalry down through great strain without consequent gain, instead of devoting himself to the real object of preventing the escape of Cronje's force. All the same, he succeeded in heading off the Boers on February 17th at Koedoesdrift, and in holding them there with his horse artillery batteries and about 1,000 dismounted men for a whole day until the infantry came up. Since the horses, as an attempt proved, were too done up to charge, the result which led finally to the surrender of Cronje must be ascribed purely to the employment of dismounted action, which was successful here on the defensive, while in the offensive at Drieput, by the same means, nothing was achieved. Once more in the fighting at Paardeburg on the following day the dismounted cavalry again took part and prevented the advance of a hostile force.

On the resumption of the advance on Bloemfontein, after Cronje's surrender, the cavalry was again directed against the line of retreat of the Boers who were still standing their ground. When the position at Poplar Grove was stormed by the English infantry, and the Boer retreat became a rout, French, who was only 5 kilometres away from their line of retreat, could easily have overwhelmed them if his horses—which, in spite of a comparatively long rest after Cronje's surrender, were completely done up—had been able to move forward even at a trot. He was obliged, however, to content himself with following the Boers up slowly, and was not able to keep even a patrol in actual touch with them. Had it been this day possible for the cavalry to strike in the right place, the capture of the last Boer force then in the field, as well as of President Kruger, who accompanied it, would probably have been effected and the war would have been ended considerably earlier.

Owing to there being no hostile cavalry, the work of the English horsemen was much lightened. The Boers—so far as they were mounted—can only be looked on as mounted infantry. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that a mounted force like that under Delarey, charging, and keeping up a hot fire at the same time, succeeded on March 7th, 1902, at Trebosch, in putting to flight an English force of 1,200 men, including 900 mounted men, under Lord Methuen, and in capturing much booty.

From this consideration of incidents embracing a period of over 90 years, my audience will already have partly drawn their conclusions. It is now necessary to bring all these into line and to select from among the details of modern battle that which seems desirable for our arm. I include general conditions, and not only those of our own home service.

The great importance of the personality of the commander has been repeatedly insisted upon, and I shall therefore not mention it again. The same with regard to the various experiences as to the

need for so training cavalry that they will not shrink from sacrifice. The need, too, for a really strong force of cavalry is apparent.¹

In regard to organisation, we must cling to the important axiom that effective work in the first line cannot be expected of Landwehr cavalry. The same may be said of Line cavalry, when, through a too high percentage of registered horses, they acquire something of the character of Landwehr cavalry; the efficiency of this arm depends less on men than on horses. In the second rank stands the demand for armament with a long-range, quick-firing rifle to be attached to the rider. It must be sighted to at least 1,800 metres, since the fire-action of cavalry will often be carried on at long rather than at short ranges, as, for instance, in demonstrations, harrying the enemy, forcing the adversary to disclose his plans, etc. Cavalry must therefore be specially trained to the use of long-range sights, in rapidly picking up its target, in judging distance, even when riding at a gallop; but on the other hand, snap-shooting—since there is no time to turn out marksmen—is only in so far valuable that it gives the rider confidence in his weapon. A plentiful supply of cartridges, to be easily drawn from a pouch belt, is an absolute necessity. A bayonet, to be worn on the rider's hip as a short side-arm, is much wanted, in order to give the dismounted fight an offensive character.

Cavalry must be quite at home in the *fire-fight*, and its importance must be emphasised by inspections being regularly made to test their efficiency in this by some high authority, and by care being taken that it is practised by large units. The time for thorough grounding in this can only be arranged when field requirements are constantly kept in mind. Rapid dismounting and formation of firing lines, speedy remounting and forming into groups, mounted work in all kinds of country, so as to be ready to fight dismounted, are all important things to be practised. With all this, the principle must, however, be maintained, that the mounted attack with the *arme blanche* is the main thing for cavalry, and that dismounted action is only to be resorted to when the object cannot be attained on a horse. The more importance is attached to the non-avoidance of the dismounted fight, the more is importance to be laid upon the maintenance of the bold cavalry spirit and of *derring do*. For such the lance, too, will serve—the weapon which I look upon as *the weapon par excellence* for attack; the lance which gives the man wielding it in a fight a feeling of superiority over the man with the sword. At the same time, however, I do not deny that the lance is an awkward weapon when men dismount to fight on foot.

Cavalry must be trained to fight both mounted and on foot, to suit their formations to the ground. The uniform of the horseman must be made to conform to the conditions of the fight on foot; high heavy boots are in the way, head-dresses which, like those of cavalry, can be distinguished from a long distance, are unsuitable. Uniforms of conspicuous colours should disappear from the Army on account of the long range of modern fire-arms; showily-dressed regiments will draw upon themselves an enemy's fire sooner than others;

¹ Compare "Mehr Kavallerie." Ein Mahnruf im Interesse von Deutschlands Landes-verteidigung von v. Pelet-Narbonne, Generallieutenant z. D. mit zwei Karten. Berlin, 1903.

it will be impossible for patrols so clothed to do their work. Reasonable allowance can be made for tradition only when the object for the employment of the arm does not suffer.¹

The cavalry division of 6 regiments with 24 squadrons has a suitable strength. A reduction below 20 squadrons would so diminish its fighting power that often there would be no force sufficient to perform its most important work. That this organisation is already of advantage in peace time has been so often proved that I refrain from any more allusion to it. Cavalry corps can be evolved as required on mobilisation. I consider as *the most important extension of organisation* for cavalry that they should obtain through their composition and training the character of *absolutely self-contained fighting bodies*, able to maintain an action, unaided, against a force of the three arms, and equipped with all technical appliances to thoroughly perform any work which may be entrusted to them. In the light of this matter of organisation, such mere tactical questions as, for instance, whether the formation for attack be *flügelweise* or *treffenweise*² is therefore of small importance.

Twelve horse artillery guns in three batteries are a suitable number for a cavalry division, with, in addition, a machine gun detachment and mounted pioneers with each regiment, viz., a non-commissioned officer and 30 men, distributed among the squadrons, carrying neither lance nor carbine, but only sword and revolver; to be trained entirely as pioneers, and not to be employed on purely cavalry duties. Experience has taught us well enough that pioneers who do not actually accompany the troops are never at hand when wanted—even to follow close in rear is not enough.

All wagons which follow the cavalry with bridging, signalling, or demolition materials, should have the same mobility as the guns; 3 or 4 bicycles accompanying each squadron may, under certain circumstances, materially help to ease and save the horses; there is never likely to be any lack of men who know how to ride them.

To attach a battalion of mounted infantry to the cavalry division would increase greatly its fighting value. I would only suggest that great results might be expected from Jäger battalions mounted on cobs with snaffles only—such as we sent to South-West Africa.

The addition of ordinary infantry, even if they followed on wagons, would be a drag on the cavalry division.

Hitherto we have not succeeded in devising a satisfactory compressed, easily carried forage as an "iron ration" for cases of emergency, by means of which we might be able to sustain our horses, were it only for a few days. It is to be hoped that the experiments which were made soon after the last war have not finally miscarried.

¹ I remember on the day of Sedan seeing right across the wide battle field away to the woods on the Belgian frontier, a patrol of the Hussars of the Guard riding at a distance where any differently dressed rider would have been unnoticed. The uniform of our Protectorate troops is an ideal one for even European conditions.

² *Flügelweise* is when the G.O.C. the Cavalry Division has ordered one brigade to form the 1st Line, and the other two brigades behind one or both wings of that line, and all initiative as regards distance and intervals is left to the wing commanders. *Treffenweise* is when the brigades are formed into three lines, one behind the other, at regular intervals.

That the cavalry supply wagons must, if they are to fulfil their purpose, be able to move as quickly as the troops, has been already laid down by General von Bernhardt in his "Our Cavalry in Future Wars."¹ I would refer you to it.

The cavalry stands at an important point in its development. By means of the old methods it can no longer satisfactorily perform the work of modern war. For an organisation and training far broader and more elastic than of old, the expensive arm must pay the piper, and then—but then only—will the words of General Carl von Schmidt come true:—"I hope that in future battles one may be able to reckon with cavalry as with infantry divisions."

¹ Zeite auflage, Berlin, 1903.